The *Softer Side* of Hard Times
Kentucky Depression-era Quilts

presented by the
Kentucky Historical Society

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Curator's Introduction & Acknowledgments

Julienne Foster, Registrar
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Seventy-five years have passed since "Black Tuesday"; yet, the mindset of an entire generation persists. As a child of the 1980s, it is amazing how many of my early life lessons were based on trickle-down reaction to the Great Depression. "Waste not, want not" was the mantra I heard growing up in the rural farming community of Bald Knob in northern Franklin County. It was one version of the stiff-upper-lip lessons taught in New Deal training classes. In fact, Franklin Roosevelt, is known to have said, "My mother saved string—and that's not all, she had an envelope marked String too Short to Save." Other versions of the incantation include "busy hands saving household money" and "willful waste makes woeful want." The latter was often repeated by Victoria Hopper of Russell County, Kentucky. Her granddaughter, Marion Adams, who has generously donated items for this exhibition, says she knew well about "using things up, making do with what you had, or doing without."

In my own family, thrift almost became a moral issue. Bragging rights were often based on clever reuse of discarded items. My great-grandfather recovered various bowls and plates from the back alleys of downtown restaurants, where they had been accidentally thrown out with the slop he routinely gathered up to feed his hogs. The dishes were handed down in the family, and my grandfather (a WWII veteran) used to say in his no-nonsense way while passing them around his own table, "Take all you want, but eat all you take." I am the fourth generation to use these dishes, and I treasure them for what they represent to my family.

These experiences with careful conservation and recycling are not unique. Kentuckians have always prided themselves on their resolve to make do with less. The national quilt revival of the 1930s provided many with a creative way to do just that. Scraps from an underwear factory, old worn-out dresses, feedsacks, and even catalog pages could be incorporated into quilts. The bright, cherry fabrics, whether stitched into an everyday utility cover or a fancy "Sunday best," warmed bodies and minds.

Beyond creating practical, soft covers to demonstrate thrift and decorate homes, the coincidence of the Great Depression with the national quilt revival created a unique opportunity for Kentucky women. It provided them with a means to acquire revenue. Many husbands and fathers were unemployed, and farms were often in ruin. It became evident that every member of the family needed to be able to contribute to the household's shrinking income. Marketing campaigns, like those of the Louisville Bedding Company, had generated a buzz about the amazing sewing skills of Kentucky women. The buzz was heightened when Kentucky quilters scored top honors at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. Women saw their needle arts in increasing demand and started their own businesses from their homes, enjoying success and even financial independence. An article from the May 1934 *Arts and Decoration Magazine* said that there was no limit to the accomplishments of Eleanor Beard's quilters in the Kentucky mountains. Indeed, tailoring their products to meet the growing national market allowed women to take control of their family's plight and to feed hungry children. Sara Martha Wilson of Travellers Rest, Kentucky, even sent her children to college with her earnings from quilting. Women like Martha were born at the turn of the last century, well before the Nineteenth Amendment passed al-

lowing them to vote. Few were given the opportunity to attend college, but they possessed natural business acumen. Ann Bowman Manooch said of her grandmother Wilson: "She was a real heroine, born into mountain poverty, yet gifted with organizational skills. . . . If she had been born today she could have run a major corporation but, instead, spent her life caring for her family and whoever else was in need at the time."

With the onset of World War II many women left their domestic spheres and thus their cottage industries to work in factories. As was the case during the Great Depression, the war generated a great need, allowing women to become wage earners. In some ways, this was the end of an era in quilting. For example, the Louisville quilt shop, Regina Inc., could not find women to do piecework and eventually closed its doors. Ironically, by providing the confidence and social acceptance women needed to enter the workplace, cottage industries contributed, unavoidably, to their own demise.

The Depression-era quilts that remain in private and public collections have become a legacy, bearing witness to a quiet and unorganized movement toward social progress. We preserve them today because they are the physical embodiment of the resourcefulness, day-to-day struggles, and triumphs of an entire generation of women.

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I would like to thank Merikay Waldvogel, who so generously gave of her time and shared her research. This exhibition was inspired by her wonderful books and articles. I would also like to thank the talented staff of the Kentucky Historical Society for their patience and dedication and the Kentucky Historical Society Foundation for its financial support. The following individuals and public institutions contributed greatly by lending artifacts, providing photographs, or giving of their time:

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(Unless otherwise noted images, materials, artifacts, and quilts are from the Kentucky Historical Society collections.)

Kentucky's Impact on Depression-era Quiltmaking

By Merikay Waldvogel, nationally known quilt historian and author of *Soft Covers for Hard Times: Quiltmaking and the Great Depression* and coauthor of *Patchwork Souvenirs of the 1933 Chicago World's Fair*.

In the midst of the Roaring Twenties, as the United States celebrated its 150th birthday, a wave of nostalgia swept the nation. Quilts, handmade of course, reminiscent of colonial times, gained newfound popularity. People without heirloom quilts could take up quilting. Those without the time or inclination to make a quilt could buy one or have one made. Quiltmaking was on the rise, and Kentucky played an important role.

Kentucky-based quilt cottage industries employed hundreds of women. The Eleanor Beard Studio (Hardinsburg), Regina Inc. (Louisville), and the A. M. Caden Shop (Lexington), established in the 1910s and 1920s, produced quilted and appliqué items. They opened retail shops on Madison Avenue in New York City and Michigan Avenue in Chicago to sell their "Kentucky-made" products, drawing upon the state's antebellum sophistication and homespun allure.

Truthfully, the quilts made in Kentucky and sold elsewhere often bore little resemblance to quilts traditionally made in the commonwealth. Eleanor Beard Studio and Regina Inc., produced whole-cloth silk quilts for up-scale urban "boudoirs." The Anne Orr Studio (Nashville, Tenn.) and Wurzburg [& Son] (Grand Rapids, Mich), out-of-state companies employing Kentucky quilters, marketed their modern quilts as bedspreads rather than warm covers. These same designs appealed to contest judges, and when six of the thirty top finalists in the 1933 Sears National Quilt Contest were from Kentucky, people took notice.

The national publicity surrounding the success of Kentucky needle-arts solidified a mystique about the commonwealth. No other state seems to have enjoyed the prestige that Kentucky did in the 1930s. The mystique increased the demand for Kentucky-handcrafted spreads and helped to ensure much-needed revenue for families hard pressed by the economic time of the 1930s. While the national prominence of its quilters has subsided, women in Kentucky still make a living from quilting, and evidence of the state's reputation persists.

The *Softer Side* of Hard Times

Kentucky Depression-era Quilts

The Great Depression started earlier and lasted longer in Kentucky than it did in states with more urban areas. When the stock market crashed in 1929, Kentuckians were already suffering, and the hard times continued into World War II.

In the midst of such uncertainty, traditional crafts like quilting enjoyed new popularity. Pastel flower garden, sunbonnet, and whimsical animal motifs were worked into countless original and traditional quilt designs, making it easy to forget that they were produced during difficult times. They were created by cottage industry businesswomen chasing national markets and housewives who sought to keep their families warm and fed. While demonstrating that there could be *a softer side* to hard times, these pragmatic and strong-willed women secured Kentucky's role in the quilt revival of the 1930s.

Exhibition Content and Checklist

Hard Times Get Worse

The 1920s were full of change and possibility for America. For most Kentuckians, these years were less hopeful. Prohibition had dried up most of the state's two hundred distilleries and breweries. Soft-coal mining was in decline. Farmers suffered through glutted markets and falling prices.

Throughout the decade of the twenties, the savings of the upper and middle classes had been drawn into frantic speculation, far beyond the possibilities of sound investment. In October 1929 the stock market crashed, wiping out 40 percent of the paper value of common stock and the life savings of many people. Just ten months before the stock market crash, the *Louisville Courier-Journal* reported that "there is not a cloud on the horizon" and that 1929 is "foreseen as splendid year." The stock market crash drained what little prosperity was left in the state. The middle class grew smaller, creating a gulf between rich and poor. To make matters worse, drought and flood swept away what little progress some had made toward a better quality of life.

As the Depression deepened and confidence evaporated, businesses closed their doors, factories shut down, and banks failed. Farm income fell some 50 percent. The federal census of 1930 estimated that as many as 29,000 Kentuckians were without jobs and seeking work. By 1931 that figure had risen to 42,000. When he took office in December 1932, Governor Ruby Laffoon faced a state shortfall exceeding $11 million.

Interior of a Mountain Cabin, c. 1935.
Image courtesy of Audio-visual Archives, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries, Goodman-PaxtonCollection

The Depression in Kentucky was flanked by two major natural disasters, the drought of 1930 and the flood of 1937. The flood waters ravaged cities as far apart as Louisville and Paducah. The damage was estimated at $250

million; human suffering was widespread. The number of malnourished children rose steadily as the unemployment rate increased. A report from the U.S. Children's Bureau indicated that in the Louisville Public Health district one thousand more children in 1932 than in 1929 were too underweight to meet its Blue Ribbon health standard.

Woman with children and quilt, c. 1935.
Image Courtesy of University of Louisville Photographic Archives, Jean Thomas Collection

Mrs. Tessie Howard quilting.
Image Courtesy of University of Louisville Photographic Archives, Standard Oil Collection

Fan Variation quilt, hand-pieced and appliquéd, some machine piecing, cotton, c. 1930. Made by Mrs. Reager of Reager's Station in Louisville.
Loaned by University of Kentucky William T. Young Library, Wade Hall Collection

"**'29 Approached with optimism**" and "**'29 Foreseen as 'Splendid Year,'**" *Louisville Courier-Journal,* January 1, 1929.

***Kentucky Progress Magazine* cover**, January 1929.

Crowd of vehicles, c. 1930, in Middlesboro, Kentucky.
Frank Dunn Collection

"**Have you Bought Your Auto License?**" *Ballard Yeoman,* Wickliffe, Kentucky, February 5, 1932, and "**Car Owners are Warned About Tags,**" *Harlan Daily Enterprise*, February 12, 1934.

Woman pointing to automobile license plate, Governor Sampson's car with Kentucky Progress Commission specialty plate, 1929.
Frank Dunn Collection

License plate, Kentucky, 1931.
Loaned by Carlton Smith

May Queen celebration at Kentucky State Industrial College, 1935. After 1920, generally for the first time, access to college began to spill across lines of gender and ethnicity.
Wolff, Gretter, Cusick, Hill Studio Negative Collection

Greek letter jacket, c. 1932.
Donated by Mrs. John B. Roberts

Cloche hat, c. 1928.
Donated by Jean L. Ryan

Radio, made by Montgomery Ward, c. 1930, and used by the family of Ken Kenkle.
Donated by Ken Kenkle

Waffle iron, c.1935.

Rotary cradle desk telephone, bakelite, made by Western Electric, 1930–34.
General Telephone of Kentucky Collection, donated by Earl Ryke

"**State is Bankrupt,**" *Harlan Daily Enterprise*, February 27, 1934.

"**Unemployment Figures Are Highest in U.S. History,**" February 5, 1932, *Ballard Yeoman,* Wickliffe, Kentucky.

Hang Old Man Depression, Frankfort, 1932.
Cusick Collection

Men in rowboat with supplies, west side of St. Clair, Frankfort, Kentucky, 1937.
Ohio River Portrait Collection

Tricycle, c.1935. The 1937 flood destroyed property all along the Kentucky River. The Duvall family of Franklin County lived in a farmhouse only yards from the river. As the water level rose steadily on the wheels of his tricycle, eight year old Orville Jr. tried to rescue the family dishes by shuttling them to higher ground. Despite his efforts, the family lost almost everything.
Loaned by Orville Duvall Jr.

Flood-relief bread lines in Louisville, Fourth and Market, 1937.
Ohio River Portrait Collection

Farmer disc harrowing in lime and phosphate, Lee County, Kentucky, c. 1930s.
Frank Dunn Collection

"**Farms for Sale,**" February 15, 1934, *Harlan Daily Enterprise*. By early 1933 thousands of family farmers, unable to sustain the losses and pay mortgages and property taxes, were selling their land.

People gathered around a radio at a listening center in Pine Ridge, Kentucky, c. 1935.
Robert Burns Stone Collection

Picnic in the park, Bernice Moore and friends, c. 1930, Franklin County, Kentucky**.** In the 1920s picnicking and camping became a national pastime, but the tourist trade sustained a terrific blow when fewer people could afford cars. Americans "made do" by enjoying the great outdoors nearer to home.
Image courtesy of Bernice M. Moore

A **family of eleven** living in a two-room log house, eastern Kentucky, c. 1930.
Robert Burns Stone Collection

Leather infant shoes, c. 1925. In rural Kentucky newborns seldom got medical attention. Children who lived past infancy often suffered from preventable diseases as well as parasites.
Loaned by Bernice M. Moore

Coal miners in eastern Kentucky return home from a day's work, c. 1935. Nowhere were the effects of the economic crisis felt more intensely than in the coal fields. In one year, 1927, the state's coal production decreased by nearly 15 percent. As a result, over 24,000 coal miners lost their jobs by 1932.
Robert Burns Stone Collection

Moonshine still captured south of Golden Pond, "between the rivers" in western Kentucky, 1938.
Robert Burns Stone Collection

Canning jars and stoneware whiskey jug, c. 1920.
Loaned by Bernice M. Moore

Colonial Revival, The Culture Clash

In cities across the nation, the Roaring Twenties had been an age of excess, and many were shocked by the changes in the manners, morals, and fashions of American youth. Some Americans expressed their discontent with the character of modern life by preserving and embracing the past. The proponents of this idea imagined a time when life was simple and traditional values were in place. The term "colonial" became a celebratory description of anything old and valuable. Although the trend began in urban centers across the nation, it soon spread via popular print such as magazines, decorating books, and newspapers. In Kentucky, traditional crafts like quilting enjoyed new popularity as emblems of a vanishing past.

Magazines considered the appeal of spinning wheels, historic furniture, sewing patterns, and heroic icons such as George Washington central to the promotion and sale of their publications. To stimulate high sales they encouraged consumers to try their hand at quilting and marketed Colonial Revival quilt pattern reproductions. "Colonial" became a generic term for anything old. Companies like Louisville Bedding linked the word "colonial" to Civil War-era quilts that featured cotton-pieced and appliqué designs instead of the whole-cloth examples common in colonial America.

The Godey quilt
Women used magazine features and other ephemera related to Colonial Revival as inspiration for creating unique designs. Mildred Potter Lissauer of Louisville worked with her husband in designing a quilt she called the Godey quilt that became the centerpiece of their bedroom. She selected imagery reproduced from *Godey's Lady's Book*, a popular fashion magazine in print from the 1830s through 1869, as well as Godey-inspired playing cards, Christmas cards, and bridge scorebooks.

Guidebooks
In the late 1920s and early 1930s, popular books helped promote an interest in the Colonial Revival. For some Americans decorating became a passion. Afforded free time by new home appliances, they engaged in decorative arts simply to beautify their homes.

Princess Feather quilt, hand-quilted and appliquéd, cotton. The Colonial Revival lasted for several decades, during which trunks and attics were searched for antiques and family heirlooms. This quilt, made by Cora Potts Eubank of Allen County, Kentucky, in 1940, was fashioned to resemble one of those cherished family heirlooms.
Loaned by the Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

Federal American Bedroom with Washington's Plume quilt pattern from *A Little Guide to Bedroom Decorations*, printed for Louisville Bedding in 1932. Not surprisingly, George Washington was an important figure in the Colonial Revival movement. The bicentennial of his birth in 1932 generated much discussion about his sense of taste and the furnishings in his Mount Vernon home. The Princess Feather quilt pattern was sometimes called Washington's Plume when pieced in patriotic red, white, and blue.

Newspaper Patterns

By 1934 Stearns & Foster, makers of a popular quilt batting, estimated that 400 metropolitan newspapers featured articles on quilt making. Surveys showed that the quilt article was the most popular Sunday feature. Independent pattern studios published syndicated columns across the country under names like Aunt Martha, Alice Brooks, or Laura Wheeler. The Needle Art Department of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* was very active in the 1930s. In addition to offering booklets for mail-order patterns, the newspaper ran mail-order or transfer patterns by Betsy Dean, Alice Brooks, Ruth Orr, and Pattie Lee.

Colonial History quilt, hand-quilted, cotton. Made by Ruth Moore of Frankfort around 1930 from a Ruby McKim pattern printed in the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. Ruby McKim published this pattern in newspapers across the country to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of the nation. Each block contains a scene from early American history. This was one of Ruth Moore's first quilts. After tracing the printed patterns, she embroidered the outlines with thread.

Loaned by Bernice M. Moore

"**Race not always to the Swift,**" *Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 8, 1928.

"**Hard Times and Crime,**" *Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 11, 1931.

"**Parents, Protect Your Homes!**" *The Etrude*, August 1934.

"**Lecture on Colonial Homes,**" *Louisville Courier-Journal*, March 26, 1936.

Springtime Blossoms quilt pattern on a bed in a Colonial Revival-inspired room in Wendover, Leslie County, Kentucky.

Frontier Nursing Service Album, Ethel B. Miller Collection

Needlecraft Magazine, December 1929. This magazine cover of an idealized 1860s domestic scene is typical of the nostalgia for the lost past that brought about the Colonial Revival movement.

Loaned anonymously

***Woman's World Magazine* pages**, September 1928 and January 1930. These pages romanticize "prize-winning designs of colonial origin," said to be "from the needles of America's ingenious pioneer women."

Day by day the magic and beauty of Colonial America is making its way into the modern house. Olde Kentucky quilts are a delightful result of this desire to recapture the charm of early American house furnishings.

—*Good Housekeeping*, Louisville Bedding ad, April 1928

Merchandising booklet, Louisville Bedding Co., Old Kentucky Quilts, Louisville Bedding, 1931.
Loaned by Merikay Waldvogel

"Colonial Cotton spreads," Ben Snyder's of Louisville*, Louisville Courier-Journal,* February 16, 1936.

Mildred Potter Lissauer with her Godey quilt in the background, c. 1935.
Image courtesy of Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

The Godey kneeler, made by Mildred Potter Lissauer, Louisville, Kentucky, c. 1934.
Loaned by Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

Page from *Vogue* magazine, July 19, 1930, reproduced.
Image courtesy of Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

The Godey quilt, c. 1934. Lissauer had considerable help making her quilt. She hired three women from the Louisville quilting shop, Regina Inc., to spend six months quilting it.
Image courtesy of Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

Appliqué pillow cover, c.1934.
Loaned by Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

Sketch for appliqué pillowcase, c. 1934.
Loaned by Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

Playing cards and bridge scorebook cover, c. 1930.
Loaned by Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

Christmas card, c. 1930.
Loaned by Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

Star and Cross quilt in the Empire period room, reproduced from *A Little Guide to Bedroom Decoration,* Louisville Bedding Co., 1932.

Basket of Tulips quilt in the French Provincial bedroom, reproduced from *A Little Guide to Bedroom Decoration*, Louisville Bedding Co., 1932.

Lover's Knot quilt with Biedermeier characteristics, reproduced from *A Little Guide to Bedroom Decoration*, Louisville Bedding Co., 1932.

Guidebooks:
The Romance of the Patchwork Quilt, by Carrie A. Hall and Rose G. Kretsinger, 1935.

A Little Guide to Bedroom Decoration, Louisville Bedding Co., 1932.

Quilts: Their Story and How to Make Them, by Marie D. Webster, 1915.

Old Fashioned Quilts, self-published by Carlie Sexton, 1924.

Depression-era literature
The uneasiness with modern life that fueled the Colonial Revival was also expressed through literature. The Agrarian Movement, which romanticized human connections to the land, was in full swing, and the economic plight of eastern Kentuckians became the focus of many novels.

Colonial Quilts, *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Needle Art Department, used by Mrs. Sara Elizabeth Brawner O'Nan (1882–1973) of Franklin County, Kentucky. This booklet is an excellent example of how Kentucky-made quilts of this era resembled quilts made all over the country. It was first published in 1932 by Herbert Ver Mehren of Iowa and soon offered for sale by magazines and newspapers across the country. The *Louisville Courier-Journal* quilt column editors sold it as a service to its readers.
Loaned by Julienne Foster

Pattern No. 7191, Flower of Spring quilt pattern, Alice Brooks, undated. Readers who wanted full-size patterns sent a dime to the local paper, which forwarded the request to the syndicate office. Aside from the original mailing envelope, this is an example of what a person received: a single-sheet pattern, pieced in 7" blocks in a flower and stem pattern, worked with solids, scrap prints, or a combination. It includes yardage charts, assembly and finishing instructions, plus an actual pieced block.

Pattern, Ruby McKim mail-order, nine-patch pattern, c. 1930.
Loaned by Julienne Foster

Pattern No. 276, appliquéd Rose of Sharon quilt by Pattie Lee. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, March 8, 1936. In 1935 Pattie Lee's patterns were featured in every Sunday's *Courier-Journal* in a section called "Sewing Basket."

Mother Goose appliqué pattern by Pattie Lee. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, February 9, 1936.

Pattern No. 274, pieced quilt by Pattie Lee. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, March 22, 1936.

Pattern No. 284, Granny's Classical Fan quilt by Ruth Orr. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 6, 1936. Starting in the mid-1930s Orr's patterns for quilts and embroidery appeared on the Women's Page of nearly every issue of the *Courier-Journal*.

Pattern No. 5003, scrap quilt by Alice Brooks. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 21, 1934

Daisy Bouquet pattern by Betsy Dean. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 1, 1929. Almost daily in the late 1920s and early 1930s the newspaper printed simple transfer embroidery designs by Betsy Dean.

Be Prepared pattern for embroidery by Betsy Dean. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, July 15, 1928.

New Colors and Patterns

In the 1930s women wanted quilts that reminded them of their heritage, but they preferred them in "modern" pastel and light, bright color schemes. Magazine publishers adapted and updated designs, and writers often paired the themes of "old" and "new" when describing their patterns. Antique quilts were still used for inspiration, but the trend was toward modern projects in colorful fabrics created to match the modern décor.

The pastel fabrics of the 1930s were very different from the dark fabrics of the previous century. The difference can be seen in clothing and quilts. Why did dark colors go out of fashion in the early twentieth century?

- Queen Victoria's death in 1901 ended the fascination with black clothing prompted by her forty years of mourning following her husband's death.

- World War I subdued elaborate Victorian-style mourning rituals. Grand funerals and displays of mourning at home seemed inappropriate in the face of mass deaths overseas.
- The "Great War" also helped usher in an era of improved health care. As the life expectancy grew, death was less a part of everyday life, and the dark colors of mourning became less popular.

The shift from Victorian colors was gradual, moving from soft pastels to clear, bright colors. As the 1930s and 1940s got into full swing, more colors were added and became even brighter and busier.

Family and community continued to be sources for quilt patterns, though women turned more and more frequently to current magazines and booklets for inspiration. Publishers issued variations of traditional patterns as well as brand-new ones. While some were almost unworkable, others provided fresh possibilities and included appliqué designs and animal motifs.

Throughout the Depression era, Patty Shannon was the quilt column editor of the popular magazine *Kentucky Farmer's Home Journal*. She routinely featured quilt patterns mailed in by her faithful readers. She was also heavily involved in the organization of quilt contests at the Kentucky State Fair and publicized the results in her column. Her neighborly advice was missed by her readers when she left the journal in 1950.

Rosebud Wreath quilt block pattern with letter, pencil sketch, and quilting design, pink, white, and green cotton appliqué, 1943. Made by Mrs. J. A. Sallee of Nelson County, Kentucky. This pattern won an honorable mention at the Kentucky State Fair, which meant editor Patty Shannon would publish it in the *Kentucky Farmer's Home Journal*. Shannon followed the instructions provided by Mrs. Sallee and turned the designs into standard mimeographed patterns, which she offered for sale via mail order.

Loaned by Linda Knutson

One example of a new pattern was the Sunbonnet Sue. Illustrator Bertha Corbett created the first Sunbonnet girl in 1900. By 1912 magazines were printing patterns for appliquéd versions in pastel colors. After 1926 when Corbett teamed up with writer Eulalie Osgood to produce the Sunbonnet Babies textbook series, the pattern became more popular. Because of Sunbonnet Sue's popularity and the constant quest for new patterns, it did not take long before sidekicks such as Sombrero Boy and Overall Sam were introduced.

Sunbonnet Sue layette, appliquéd, embroidered, and tied infant comfort. Anna Cassall Hall of Lexington, Kentucky, made this quilt for her niece, Virginia Gregory, in 1917 when the pattern was relatively new.

Donated by Virginia Gregory

New patterns and quilting aids continued to be advertised in spite of the financial limits of the Depression. Quilting products became a major industry, and advertisers sold all sorts of labor-saving devices, from iron-on quilting patterns to precut fabric for so-called "kit" quilts.

Elephant's Child kit quilt, cotton. Made in 1934 by Hazel J. Hieronymous of Lee County. This quilt tells the story of how the elephant got his trunk from Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*. Quilt patterns with childlike themes were first introduced around 1910. Prior to this, children's quilts, like children's clothing, were miniature versions of grown-up styles.
Donated by Rose Hieronymous

Eastern Star Memory quilt, hand-pieced, cotton, 1934.
Donated by Arthur B. Rouse, Jr.

Dogwood quilt, appliquéd, cotton, c. 1935. Made by Ella Lewis Smith of Greenville, Muhlenberg County, from a kit. This floral appliqué motif uses a medium-toned "Nile" green as the background, a common color choice between 1925 and 1935.
Donated by Warren S. McDonough

"**New Colorfast Wash Fabrics!**" Sears, Roebuck and Co., *Louisville Courier-Journal,* June 18, 1933.

Log Cabin quilt top, cotton, c. 1880.
Donated by Mr. & Mrs. W. K. Johnson

Black silk day dress, c. 1895.
Donated by Isabelle Walker

Log Cabin, Pineapple Variation quilt, late 1930s. Made by students in the National Youth Administration sewing class taught by Whitlock Fennell Disher (1911–78) in Jefferson County, Kentucky.
Loaned by Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

Garden dress, c. 1930. Worn by Mildred Pine Martin (1896–1971) of Midway, Kentucky.
Donated by Kathryn West

Sears, Roebuck & Co. winter catalog, 1937.

Hat, black velvet with "shocking pink" feathers, made by Fisk, c. 1939.
Donated by Dr. & Mrs. Robert Simmons

"**Drabness Now Taboo,**" *Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 24, 1936.

The Kentucky Farmer's Home Journal, bound issues, 1938-39.
Loaned by University of Kentucky William T. Young Library

Lover's Knot quilt block, crayon layout design, pattern sheet and pattern as it appeared in *Kentucky Farmer's Home Journal*, 1943. Pieced red and white cotton, hand sewn by Mrs. Charlie Harvey of Glasgow, Kentucky.
Loaned by Linda Knutson

Designs Worth Doing **catalog page, "Ready-cut Quilts,"** c. 1930.
Loaned by Julienne Foster

Iron-on quilting pattern, W.L.M. Clark, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri, 1934. Although many women could not afford to buy patterns and other quilting items, several women could go together on such purchases. Iron-on patterns could be shared and reused.
Loaned by Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

Mountain Mist batting wrapper, c. 1935.

Farm Journal & Farmer's Wife Quilt Patterns Old & New, c.1930
Loaned anonymously

Grandma Dexter New Appliqué and Patchwork Designs, c. 1935.

Sunbonnet Babies in Holland, 1930. Written by Eulalie Osgood Grover with illustrations by Bertha Corbett.

Sunbonnet Sue pattern, hand-drawn, c. 1930.

Yo-Yo quilt section, cotton, made by Bernice M. Moore of Frankfort, Kentucky, c. 1940.
Loaned by Julienne Foster

Magazine ad for The Elephant's Child kit quilt pattern, *Woman's Home Companion*, 1934. Most figural quilts with pictures of people, animals, and whimsical scenes were made from kits.
Donated by Rose Hieronymous

Infant crib with springs, c. 1935.
Donated by Justine Sprenger

Child's comfort, c. 1940. Made by Vivian Moore of Mercer County, Kentucky, possibly from feedsacks.
Donated by the Estate of James and Vivian Moore

Ducky Wucky pull toy, c. 1938.
Donated by Mrs. J.B. Mount

Girl's robe and nightgown, c. 1925.
Donated by Marylou Hayes Routh

Butterfly quilt, pieced by Lavada Belk (1918–35) of Warren County, Kentucky, and quilted by her mother, Virgie Galloway Belk, in 1934.
Donated by Christine B. Martin

Virginia Snow Butterfly Series, reproduced from *Grandma Dexter's New Appliqué and Patchwork Designs,* c. 1935.

Butterfly appliqué patterns, c. 1930.

Double Wedding Ring quilt, c. 1935. Made at the A. M. Caden Shop in Lexington, this scalloped example incorporates fine stitches and a well-conceived placement of prints and solids that lend it uniformity and harmony. The Double Wedding Ring pattern was possibly the most widely used of the period.
Loaned by Colleen Caden Welsh

Double and Single Wedding Ring cutting guides, Double Wedding Ring quilt and pillow-slip pattern sheet, c. 1930.

Transfer pattern with pieced quilt pattern, c. 1930.

Sunbonnet Sue transfer pattern, c. 1930.

Various cardboard and sandpaper pattern guides, c. 1930. Heavy sandpaper was used for making patterns because it had "tooth" and would not slip around on the fabric when being traced.

Blazing Star mail-order quilt pattern, Ruby McKim Studios, c. 1930.

Colonial Maid pattern sheet, c. 1930.

Spectrum quilt, hand-pieced and quilted, percale fabric, 1935. Made by George W. Yarrall, an engraver for a Bowling Green jeweler. According to family tradition, Yarrall took up the needle after reading an account of a dynamite expert who had quilted to keep his hands limber. The idea of quilting as occupational therapy first appeared during the 1930s and gave men a socially acceptable reason to try their hand at a craft previously limited to the female sphere.
Loaned by the Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

Design for Spectrum quilt, by George Yarrall. The pattern for this quilt is similar to those known as Trip Around the World or Postage Stamp; however, Yarrall created his own design using an unusually large number of tiny pieces, 66,153 to be precise. Yarrell decided to give the pattern the name Spectrum, based on the vivid arrangement of colors.

Floral Wreath quilt, appliquéd, c.1930. Made from a kit by Ella Lewis Smith of Greenville, Muhlenberg County, Kentucky.
Donated by Warren S. McDonough

Original Designs

During the Great Depression quilt making became an outlet for self-expression when money was scarce. A woman could fulfill her creative impulses, yet yield something practical for the family. Although many copied published patterns, some created new interpretations by looking at photos from magazines. Many beautiful quilts were made based on nothing more than an idea or a picture in a book. Some of the most striking designs were created for quilt competitions like the Sears contest at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair.

Rose of Sharon quilt, appliquéd, hand- and machine-stitched, made by Lou Fanny Sutton of Green County, c. 1939. Cora Lee Sizemore Smith paid Lou Fanny Sutton and her mother to make this quilt as a wedding gift for Smith's daughter, Helen. The quilt appears to be an original interpretation of a very old pattern. The Rose of Sharon's romantic Biblical symbolism explains its common use as a bridal quilt pattern.
Donated by Helen B. Abney

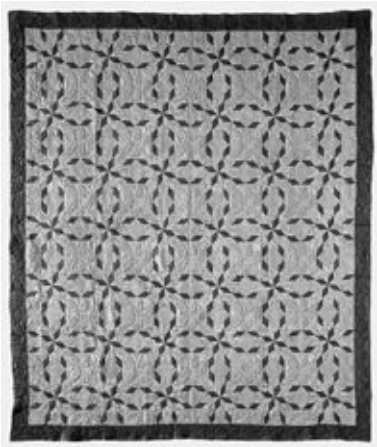
Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. For thy love is better than wine. I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is

my love among the daughters. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat under his shadow with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banquet house, and his banner over me was love.

—Song of Solomon

A Century of Progress

Many original designs were created for quilt contests and fairs. None was more important than the 1933 Chicago "Century of Progress" World's Fair. Six months before the fair opened, Sears, Roebuck and Co. announced a quilt contest with $7,500 in prizes, a generous sum during the height of the Depression. Antique quilts were discouraged in favor of original designs or traditional patterns. Quilters submitted entries to local Sears stores for judging, and winners went on to regional competitions. Three winners from each region were sent to Chicago for display to compete for the national prize. A total of thirty quilts were displayed. Of the finalists, six were from Kentucky. The most any other state could boast was two.



Star of the Bluegrass quilt, grand prizewinner at the Chicago World's Fair by Margaret Rogers Caden of Lexington, Kentucky. Caden and her sisters ran an elite needlework shop called A.M. Caden that quilted tops. Her original design was traditional, but its construction was exquisite. It was quilted 16 stitches per inch, and the fancy, stuffed quilt work, called trapunto, was a strong influence on the judges.

Loaned by Colleen Caden Welsh

The Star of the Bluegrass quilt is a duplicate of the winning quilt. The Caden sisters had it made after the original was given to first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Within one month of winning the contest, Caden was selling patterns and fabric so that others could re-create the quilt. No doubt the notoriety must have increased their business.

Because of this contest and the support of women like Eleanor Roosevelt, quilting came to be seen as an art rather than a utilitarian craft. Unfortunately, there were no rules governing presidential gifts, and it is likely that the first lady gave the quilt away, as she did with many gifts. The quilt's whereabouts today is a mystery.

It was the handsomest piece of needlework imaginable. Swathed in cellophane, it hung suspended full length in the display room of Sears and Roebuck's exposition along with dozens of other gorgeous specimens, and on it proudly fluttered the prize ribbon.

—Louise Fowler Roote, quilt columnist, *Cappers Weekly*, describing the Star of the Bluegrass made by Margaret R. Caden.

Pansies & Ribbons quilt, c. 1930. Made by Mattie Clark Black of Lexington. Black worked for Margaret Caden and helped make the Star of the Bluegrass Quilt. She was commissioned by Caden to stuff the leaf-like designs for which the quilt received so much praise. Black supported her family during the

Depression with fine sewing when her husband James was unable to support them. Her role in the making of the quilt was never acknowledged by Caden.

Loaned by the University of Kentucky William T. Young Library, Wade Hall Collection

"**See Sears Quilt Exhibit!**" *Louisville Courier-Journal,* May 18, 1933. This ad announced the judging day for the local Century of Progress quilt competition held in Louisville at the Crystal Ballroom of the Brown Hotel. Out of the 395 quilts entered, Frances Klemenz's Bleeding Hearts took first place. A May 20, 1933, Louisville newspaper article reported that:

> *Miss Klemenz went to the Brown and viewed the exhibit in the forenoon, little dreaming that she would be the winner of the first prize. She had some shopping to do and left the exhibit. She was opening the door of her home on her return when a reporter notified her she had taken first prize. . . . "I am too overjoyed. I never dreamed I would win it, but I did put in many long hours."*


See Sears' Quilt Exhibit!

An Eye-Filling Feast of Hand Wrought Loveliness!

PLACE—Brown Hotel Crystal Ballroom
TIME—Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., One Day Only

EVERYONE INVITED

—396 quilts were entered by contestants in Louisville and vicinity in Sears' Century of Progress Quilt Contest. These may all be seen Friday in the Crystal Ballroom of the Brown Hotel. Entrants' ages are from 13 to 87. One quilt took 3,600 hours to make. One has over 6,000 pieces. The first prize winner will be shown at the Century of Progress in Chicago.

No Admission Charge, of Course

—Sears are indebted to the following women for consenting to be

Contest Judges

The 1933 World's Fair marked the centennial of the city of Chicago and commemorated the many scientific discoveries from the previous century. Although planners were worried about attendance due to the poor economy, people came in droves. Once visitors entered the gates, they were transported into a magical world where worries and cares were banished.

Century of Progress souvenirs, 1933–34. One rule of the contest was that all original quilt patterns would become property of Sears. The clever arrangement allowed the company to sell the patterns. The Louisiana Rose quilt block pattern (shown here) was purchased at the Chicago World's Fair quilt exhibit by Laura Hopper Adams of Warren County. Laura's husband worked for the L&N railroad and was able to get the entire family free travel passes to Chicago.

Loaned by Marion Adams and John Paul Adams

Sears officials examine quilts, 1933. Over 25,000 quilts from across the country were made for the competition. The *Lexington Herald* reported in a June 1933 article, "At Chicago alone, mail order entries came in cartons, hat boxes, and old suit cases. They made a mountain peak of packages 12 feet high and 100 feet in circumference at the base."

Image courtesy of Sears Archives

Bleeding Hearts quilt, 1933, cotton, appliquéd. Made by Frances Klemenz of Louisville. Klemenz, an unemployed seamstress, won first place in the local contest held at the Brown Hotel in Louisville. Her prize was $10 and an opportunity to compete at the regional level. After Louisville, this quilt traveled to Chicago and took third prize in the regional contest. It was later displayed at the Chicago World's Fair.

Loaned by Susan Smith, niece of Frances Klemenz

Original design for Bleeding Hearts quilt pattern, watercolor and graphite, by Loraine Neff, c. 1930. Neff, who designed the prizewinning quilt, had worked with Frances Klemenz at the Louisville quilt shop called Regina Inc.
Loaned by Ruth Neff

Martha's Vineyard quilt, hand-quilted and appliquéd, c. 1930. Stearns & Foster manufacturer's sample #28, attributed to Sara Martha Wilson. Two finalists from the World's Fair contest copied this Stearns & Foster pattern. One was made by Mrs. George Litsey of Leitchfield, Kentucky, who won second place at the Memphis Regional competition. It is highly probable that she did not make her winning entry. Litsey operated a professional quilting business, much like Caden's of Lexington, and hired professional quilters. Sara Wilson of Travellers Rest, Kentucky, was one of the women who worked for her. Wilson also worked for Stearns & Foster producing quilts from patterns developed by the company; and it is possible she not only quilted Litsey's prizewinning entry, but also this example, which belongs to Stearns & Foster.
Loaned by Leggett & Platt Incorporated

World's Fair scrapbook, 1933. Photographs of Pearl Soyars Gentry (1884–1966) of Webster County, Kentucky.
Loaned by Kentucky Library and Museum, Western Kentucky University

World's Fair playing cards with Arcturus logo, 1933.
Loaned by Marion Adams and John Paul Adams

Souvenir spoons, 1933.
Loaned by Marion Adams and John Paul Adams

Souvenir bracelet, 1933.
Loaned by Billy Gatewood

Souvenir pillow, scenes of the fair, 1933.

Pop-up brochure, Sears, Roebuck and Co. at the Century of Progress, 1933.

Souvenir book, ***Chicago World's Fair***, 1934.

Booklet, ***Sears Century of Progress in Quilt Making***, 1933.

Panorama, Chicago World's Fair Fairgrounds, 1933.

Booklet, ***The Quilt Fair Comes to You***, 1934.

Woman designing quilt pattern with pencil and T-square, Dalton, Louisiana.
Image courtesy of Audio-Visual Archives, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries, Doris Ulmann Photographic Collection

Four Arrow quilt, cotton, pieced, blocks set on point, c. 1925–40. The pattern for this quilt appears to be an original design created by Millie Anderson McCain. Born on a farm in Marion County, Kentucky, Millie helped run the family farm and worked as a professional seamstress for extra income. She made her own patterns by studying fashion magazines such as *Godey's Lady's Book* and *Peterson's Magazine*.
Donated by Martha G. Kelly

The Quilt Business

One reaction to the "progress" celebrated at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair was a feeling that old-time "know-how" was being replaced by cheap mechanical processes. This feeling had been growing since the 1920s and resulted in an increase in traditional crafts, making hand-pieced and hand-quilted items more valued. To meet the growing demand, businesses emerged that ranged from a single woman doing piecework for neighbors, to well-organized cottage industries, and modern firms that designed and produced quilts. The common element was that women did the work.

Two **female workers** operate an automated quilting machine, Louisville Bedding Co., c. 1930.
Image courtesy of University of Louisville Photographic Archives

Quilt Companies

After the success of Kentucky quilters at the Chicago World's Fair, owning a Kentucky-made quilt became synonymous with tradition and quality. Companies like Stearns & Foster, which made quilting supplies and sold patterns, and Louisville Bedding, which made quilts, boasted of the connection through national advertisements. Their ads implied that their products were based on the old-fashioned handmade traditions of Kentucky needle-arts. The reality was that these businesses were making products using a slick marketing plan designed to appeal to people eager to capture a little bit of nostalgia for their own homes.

Olde Kentucky Quilt with box, c. 1930. Louisville Bedding's line of more expensive quilts came delivered in a box with a romanticized image of Kentucky gentry. Those on the lower end, like the example on display, were simply wrapped in paper.
Image courtesy of University of Louisville Photographic Archives

Cottage Industries

"Cottage industry" denotes the creation of crafted products in the home, rather than in a factory. Quilt making became a popular cottage industry in the 1920s and 30s. Some women were able to expand their domestic business to employ other women, thereby creating jobs for desperate families. In cases where a father or husband either lost his job or was not around, a woman's income from quilting often was the only thing keeping food on the table.

Sarah Martha Brewer Wilson (1885–1963) was constantly quilting and left a quilting frame set up in her home all the time. She was paid between $15-30 to quilt. When a big job came, such as quilting for Stearns & Foster, she would do all the work herself. If asked to do a smaller job, she would often employ other women in her community to help, paying them two or three dollars to come to her home for the day. The ladies enjoyed the social time together. They would bring sandwiches, and one of Martha's daughters would usually make candy for them.

Dancing Daffodils quilt, hand-appliquéd and quilted, c. 1935. Housewife Sarah Martha Brewer Wilson of Leitchfield, Kentucky, made this quilt for the quilt supply company

Stearns & Foster. Wilson had a large family and had always quilted. When she needed money to pay for her childrens' education, it was a natural decision to use her needle-art. Her business grew to include clients from as far away as Massachusetts and Missouri. Her granddaughter, Ann Bowman Manooch, described her as:

> *A real heroine born in mountain poverty, yet gifted with organizational skills. A real artist, but one whose medium was limited to scraps of cloth. . . . Granny was a woman who, if she had been born today, could have run a major corporation, but instead spent her life caring for her family and whoever else was in need at the time.*

Like other quilts she made for Stearns & Foster, this **quilt** was used by the company as an example of the ideal look of a quilt made from their pattern.
Loaned by Leggett & Platt, Incorporated

"I Can't Say Too Much for Mountain Mist," 1937. This advertisement, featuring a testimonial from Sarah Wilson, was originally printed in the March issues of *Home Arts-Needlecraft Magazine* and *Better Homes & Gardens.* Stearns & Foster needed an image of Mrs. Wilson to accompany the ad, so they paid for her to have her photograph made at a studio in Irvine, Kentucky. The ad plays up her Kentucky connection, implying that if the product is good enough for Kentucky quilts, it is good enough for anyone's quilts.

Fuchsia floral quilt, hand-appliquéd and quilted, cotton, c. 1935. Designed by Loraine Neff at Regina Inc. This hand-quilted and appliquéd floral pattern was produced by Regina Inc. of Louisville, Kentucky. The company employed a handful of women in its shop located on Bardstown Road to design elaborate quilts and quilted products. The actual quilting was done by various women throughout the state.
Loaned by Merikay Waldvogel

Regina Inc., bedroom design, c. 1935. Regina went out of business in the forties because of a labor shortage during WWII. Many of the women who had previously done piecework for the company out of their homes found steady work in factories supporting the war efforts and were not available for part-time piecework.
Image courtesy of Ruth Neff

In 1921 Ruth Eleanor Beard (1888–1951) started a cottage industry in Hardinsburg, Kentucky. From her home she employed four women as helpers. Her idea was to find a market for the surplus wool produced on the farms of her husband and neighbors. Her first quilts sold immediately, and she soon opened several retail shops across the country. By 1929 she had outlets in Louisville, New York City, Pasadena, Santa Barbara, and Chicago.

Eleanor Beard expanded her Hardinsburg quilt shop to outlets across the country. As demand grew she branched out into other handcrafted products such as pillows, robes, novelties, and even toilet-seat covers. Her stock came from the estimated one thousand farm women from whom she purchased needlework in Breckinridge County, Kentucky. In a May 1934 *Arts and Decoration* magazine, the superb skill of the women was recog-

nized: "There seems to be no limit to the accomplishment of these craft workers of the Kentucky mountains." With Beard's vision and their talent, many women were able to help their families survive the difficult times of the Depression.

Sailor Ship quilt, cotton, appliquéd, made by the Eleanor Beard Studio, c. 1940.
Loaned by Jane Scott Hodges

Mountain Mist batting wrapper and advertising, c. 1934.

Twinkling Star quilt, machine-stitched, preprinted fabric, made by Louisville Bedding Co., c. 1935. Louisville Bedding promoted and advertised their machine-made quilts as the "best" and sold them under the label "Olde Kentucky Quilts." The quality of its less-expensive products was questionable, but the mystique was irresistible to many consumers around the country. The Twinkling Star was sold in copen blue, heliotrope, old rose, and spring green.

Olde Kentucky Quilts, c. 1930.
Loaned by Merikay Waldvogel

Price list for "Olde Kentucky Quilts," 1931. Louisville Bedding Co. sold several different versions of its quilts, which varied in level of finish and quality.
Loaned by Merikay Waldvogel

Delivery truck parked outside Louisville Bedding Co. around 1930. Louisville Bedding did well during the Great Depression. Its two-hundred-strong workforce avoided layoffs and considered themselves lucky to work for the company.
Image courtesy of University of Louisville Photographic Archive

Letter and counter card, Olde Kentucky Quilts, Louisville Bedding Co., 1931.
Loaned by Merikay Waldvolge

***Workbasket* magazines**, The magazine catered to women like Sarah Martha Wilson who profited from their handcrafted articles. It often included patterns for quilts, crochet, tatting, and weaving projects that could be made for "ready sale."

Double Wedding Ring quilt, pieced by Nell Sanders Congleton, c. 1935. Nell gave the quilt to her daughter Betty when she graduated from college. Betty paid Mertie Hall Congleton of the Proctor Precinct in Lee County, Kentucky, to do the quilting. Mertie was paid to quilt for neighbors and was said to be one of the "last fancy quilters in eastern Kentucky."
Donated by Betty Carolyn Congleton

Regina Inc. of Louisville advertisement from *Country Life* magazine, October 1939. The business, owned by Marguerite Kleinjohn, appears to have had locations in Chicago as well as Louisville. They catered to upscale clients who could afford to hire the company to create cohesive interior designs.

"Aster" quilt original design, watercolor and colored pencil, by Loraine Neff for Regina Inc., c. 1935.
Loaned by Ruth Neff

Elephant pin cushion, turquoise taffeta, labeled Eleanor Beard, c. 1935.
Loaned by Jane Scott Hodges

Eleanor Beard catalog, *Original Designs in Find Hand Quilting*, c. 1930s.
Loaned by Merikay Waldvogel

Eleanor Beard catalog, *Eleanor Beard Presents*, c. 1930s.
Loaned by Jane Scott Hodges

Makeup tote with butterfly design, mauve taffeta, made by Eleanor Beard Studio, c. 1930s.
Loaned by Jane Scott Hodges

Eleanor Beard portfolio and style book, c. 1940. This book features the Sailor Ship quilt on display.
Loaned by Jane Scott Hodges

Formal Garden quilt, appliqué kit, designed and manufactured by Wurzburg's, Grand Rapids, Michigan, made by A.M. Caden Shop, Lexington, Kentucky. The elite Caden Shop, run by Margaret Caden and her sisters Ann and Mame, produced fancy work for the well-to-do. In addition to quilts, blankets, and pillow shams, they produced handkerchiefs and custom drapes. The sisters had several branches, including one in Saratoga Springs, New York. Caden hired rural women to do piecework, paying between $12 and $25 per quilt top.
Loaned by Merikay Waldvogal

Making Do with Utility Quilts

While the Great Depression saw a revival of interest in quilt making, the 1930s and early 1940s were hard times. People could not afford to be wasteful or extravagant. Women became more creative in finding ways to make "something from nothing," like recycling fabric from old clothing, using feedsack fabrics, and learning how to be frugal with every scrap. Women in urban areas were more likely to turn to government relief programs for employment and training on how to "make do." Isolated rural women had already developed a self-reliant outlook. Some found it hard to see much difference between times before and after the 1929 stock market crash.

Bud McCoy and family, c. 1935. This family selected items that were important to them when they posed for the photograph. All the items relate to special skills: the husband and small son hold banjos, while the older son whittles; the mother displays her needle-art. These items represent self-sufficiency, the know-how to obtain physical and emotional comforts without buying them from a store. These are the skills that helped rural families survive the Great Depression.
Image courtesy of University of Louisville Photographic Archives, J. Thomas Collection

Feedsacks
Many quilters could not afford store-bought fabric during the Depression years. Those who needed quilts for practical reasons often bleached feedsacks to use as backings and foundations for quilts. Some women used dyes and even walnut hulls and oak bark to color the sacks.

Waiting in front of the grocery store on Saturday, feedsacks in window, Breathitt County, Kentucky, 1940.

Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Marion Post Wolcott Collection

Feed and flour companies soon realized that they could increase sales by packaging their products in sacks of fabric printed in popular colors and designs. Women could "make do" but still use fashionable prints in their sewing projects. Feedsack material was commonly used in making dresses, aprons, and quilts.

Pieced and tied comfort, maker unknown, made from scraps of men's underwear from a garment company in Frankfort, c. 1940. Strips of each fabric were precut into rectangles of the same size, then sewn together. Even though this simple comfort was designed strictly for utility, it is clear from the placement of the solid pink pieces that some thought went into the design.

Loaned by Julienne Foster

"**The Hot Iron,**" *Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 2, 1928.

"During the Depression things were pretty bad. . . . In the winter months the cabin was very cold and heat was hard to come by. Everything was open and you could see out the cracks in the doors and floors. Most of the time my mom would heat the irons in front of the open fireplace . . . wrap them up in a quilt and put them in bed with us. . . . If we kept our face out from under the covers at night ice would collect where we breathed."

—Richard T. Creech, Breathitt County, Kentucky
Kentucky Explorer, October 30, 2003

Training Work Center, 1935. The Works Progress Administration Training Work Center in Louisville employed over 6,000 women in need of financial assistance. These women were trained and employed to make garments for distribution to other needy families.

Image courtesy of Audio-Visual Archives, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries, Goodman-Paxton Collection

Women in a training center in Louisville learn how to make "something from nothing."

Image courtesy of Audio-Visual Archives, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries, Goodman-Paxton Collection

Louisville Sewing Center, 1935. The women in this photo appear to be learning how to quilt.

Image courtesy of Audio-Visual Archives, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries, Goodman-Paxton Collection

Diary of the Depression, March 1935. Mary Ruth Slaton lived out the Depression years on a dark-fire tobacco farm in Hopkins County, Kentucky. She raised a garden, canned food, made butter, raised chickens, made quilts, and even grew a little cotton to make batts.

Cabbage shredder, c. 1930. Used by Mary Ruth Slaton of Hopkins County, Kentucky.
Donated by Robert Slaton

Sausage grinder, c. 1930. Used by Mary Ruth Slaton of Hopkins County, Kentucky.
Donated by Robert Slaton

Pair of hand cards, c. 1910.
Donated by Linda West and Pattye Jo Pavlovic

Women in a farming community carding cotton to be used in quilts, Woodville, California, 1942.
Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information Photograph Collection

Mrs. Josh Callahan in the cellar of her new home, showing some of her home-canned goods near Barbourville, Kentucky, 1940.
Image courtesy of University of Louisville Photographic Archives, Farm Security Administration Kentucky print

Butter mold, c. 1890.
Donated by Nannie Smith

Mountain woman churning butter on the steps of front porch of her home, up Burton's Fork off Middle Fork of the Kentucky River, Breathitt County, Kentucky.
Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Marion Post Wolcott Collection

Grandmother's Flower Garden quilt, c. 1935. Mrs. John McNeil of Louisville pieced this quilt from feedsack fabric. Grandmother's Flower Garden was one of the most popular quilt patterns incorporating feedsacks.
Donated by Tom and Bea Murphy

Raw feed sacks and Putnam dyes, c. 1930.

Practical Articles You Can Make from Flour Sacks, Household Science Institute, 1928. The instructions for the crib quilt featured in this booklet recommend using:

> *Two flour bags, bought from your baker for a few cents. . . . To remove stamping cover the inked spots with lard or soak them in kerosene overnight. Then wash the bag out in lukewarm water.*

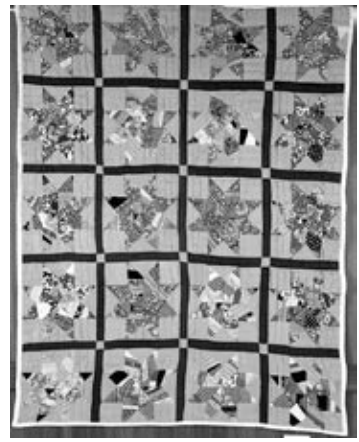
Printed feedsack fabric, c. 1940. Manufacturers introduced printed feedsacks after 1925.
Donated by Brenda Richardson

Feedsack dress, c. 1938.

Grandmother's Flower Garden quilt, hand-pieced and quilted, 1932. Quilts were frequently made from sewing scraps and out-grown clothing. This quilt was started in 1932 by Nannie Madden Smith, age eight, of McKee in Jackson County, Kentucky. She pieced the top while watching her baby sister as her parents worked their fields. While some of the fabric was purchased a piece at a time as money was available, other fabrics were from feedsacks and scraps from dresses she had made for herself. Nannie quilted the piece at age twelve, around 1935–36.
Donated by Nannie Smith

I remember [my mother] spent much of the winter piecing and quilting with the coal fire keeping us warm. She would take heavy shirts and pants, anything she had, and made what she called "Linsey" quilts. They were lined with flannel. The house didn't have good heating so we needed four quilts on each bed. She made them from scraps and from our dresses. I really enjoyed looking at my old dresses after they were put into a quilt.

—Bessie Brewer, Pike County



Striped Star quilt, hand- and machine-pieced, cotton, c. 1930. An unknown quilter made this string quilt in Lexington, Kentucky. The random placement creates a charming scrap look.

Loaned by the University of Kentucky William T. Young Library, Wade Hall Collection

String-pieced quilt blocks, c. 1935. Made in Frankfort, Kentucky, these blocks were constructed on a foundation of Sears, Roebuck and Co. pages. Quilters usually removed paper foundations before quilting but on occasion left in the paper to add a little extra warmth. There was no wrong way to make a string quilt, and often little thought went into placement. In this example tiny pieces used toward the center and at the points of each star create an on-point design that took nimble fingers and a great deal of patience.

A **quilting party** in an Alvin, Wisconsin, home, May 1937. The women in this photo are making a string quilt.

Image courtesy of the Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information Photograph Collection

Children of Monroe Jones, a miner at Four Mile in Bell County, Kentucky, look out the kitchen window. The windows of the home had no panes and the door frames had no doors. Old quilts and boxes were used during the winter to cover the openings.

Image courtesy of Audio-Visual Archives, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries, Lee Photographic Collection

Works Progress Administration workers making and packaging comforters for distribution to needy families, 1935. The wool used as batting was provided to the state by the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation. Over 45,000 cotton and wool comforters were created by women through this relief program.

Image courtesy of Audio-Visual Archives, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries, Goodman-Paxton Collection

Women quilting for charity at St. Joseph's Orphanage, Louisville, Kentucky, c. 1940.

Image courtesy of University of Louisville Photographic Archives

Quilting Bees

Quilting parties (or "bees" as they have come to be known) got their name from the busy efficient insects whose hard work benefits the hive. In the same way, sharing the work of making quilts benefits a community. Women would often piece their tops in the winter months and save the tedious stitching for warmer days when neighbors could get together. They became important social events. It was an opportunity to exchange news, recipes, and patterns. Much catching up and gossip went on in these circles. A running joke has been that ladies never missed a bee for fear they would become the topic of conversation.

Training Center, c. 1935. Quilting bees were encouraged by government New Deal programs, local quilting initiatives, and county extension offices. These programs recorded regional traditions and helped teach the skills of self-reliance that were beginning to be lost due to the modern industrialized times. Training centers used the motto "busy hands saving household money."

Image courtesy of Audio-Visual Archives, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries, Goodman-Paxton Collection

Comfort, pieced and tied, c. 1940. In addition to the spiraling economic situation, Kentuckians had to deal with another force out of their control—Mother Nature. The great flood of 1937 devastated the lives of many, and charity programs were set up to help those most in need. Local churches, county governments, and national organizations stepped in to provide relief. This patchwork comfort was made by Anna Henderson Dishman (1901–94). Mrs. Dishman lived in the African American community called New Zion near Georgetown, Kentucky. She belonged to the New Zion Methodist Women's Group and the Scott County Homemakers. Through these quilting bee groups Anna helped provide charitable relief by sewing and making quilts for families in need.
Donated by Marilyn Dishman

Flood victims in Louisville, Kentucky, 1937.
Image courtesy of Audio-Visual Archives, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries, Goodman-Paxton Collection

Quilting frame, c. 1930. Handmade in Washington County, Kentucky, by a local craftsman, Edgar Brown, for the women of the Keeling Royalty family.
Donated by Elizabeth Peavler

Women quilting on a frame in tenant home, Mississippi, 1939.
Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information Photograph Collection

Members of the women's club making quilt, 1940. Granger Homesteads, Iowa.
Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information Photograph Collection

Quilting bee, making quilts for needy families,1940. Although these women were photographed in Scranton, Iowa, the scene was much the same in Kentucky.
Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information Photograph Collection

Farm worker and his wife in their cottage at the Farm Security Administration labor camp in Iowa, 1941. When it was impossible for the quilting to be completed in a short period, storing a half-finished quilt became a problem. Some solved the problem by suspending the frame from the ceiling using a pulley system so that it could be reeled up out of the way.
Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information Photograph Collection

Dancing Daffodils quilt
Loaned by Leggett &Platt, Incorporated

An original Stearns & Foster pattern, the Dancing Daffodils quilt inspiration came from William Wordsworth's poem, "The Daffodils.""

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed – and gazed – but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

—William Wordsworth (1770–1850)